Jones was indicted, found guilty, and executed at Charlestown, for the pretended crime; and in 1652, Hugh Parsons, of Springfield, being indicted for the same crime, was found guilty by the jury; but the magistrates, it seems, were not wholly converted to the doctrine of prestigious agency, and refused to consent to the verdict. The case came before the general court, and he was finally declared not guilty. About this time a woman at Dorchester, and another at Cambridge, were put to death for the crime; and not long after, the demons began their work in Boston, and Ann Hibbins, one of their pupils, was condemned and executed.

Details of the whole of the cases that occurred in New England, would tire the patience of the reader, and present a scene too disgusting for relation. Some of the most prominent, and such as will exhibit the nature of the delusion, in various parts of the country, will be noticed.

From Boston, the invisibles winged their way to Hartford in 1662, and tried their arts upon one Ann Cole; who living in the vicinity of a Dutch family, had learned a little of their language, with which the demon, seem to have been acquainted. With her the spirits held correspondence, sometimes in English, and at others in Dutch. Dr. Cotton Mather, who was very fertile in stories of witchcraft, in which he was a believer, gives the following statement of this affair. "Several eminent ministers wrote speeches of the spirits, thus heard in the mouth of Ann Cole, who was brought before the magistrates. The ministers now reading to her what they had written, she with astonishment, confessed that the things were so; and that she with other persons named in their papers, had familiarity with a devil. She said she had not made a formal covenant with her devil, but only promised that she would go with him when he called for her, which she had several times done accordingly; and that he told her that at Cristmas they would have a merry meeting, and then the agreement between them should be subscribed. She acknowledged the day following, that when the ministers began to write what they did, she was in such a rage, that she could have torn them to pieces, and was resolved upon the denial of her guilt; but

after they had read awhile, she was as if her flesh were pulled from her bones, and she could not longer deny what they charged upon her. She declared that the devil appeared unto her, first in the shape of a deer, skipping about her, and at last proceeded so far as, in that shape, to talk with her; and that the devil had frequently carnal knowledge of her.* The raving girl was afterwards tried, condemned and executed.

The prestigious spirits returned to Massachusetts in 1671. At Groton they tormented Elizabeth Knapp; but the poor woman does not appear to have inflicted torments upon any of her neighbors, nor was she indicted for the crime.

During Philip's war the demons seem to have suspended their operations, Perhaps they were "driven into the American deserts, raging there in very tragical instances."† But the war having terminated, the invisibles renewed their warfare. At Newbury, in 1679, the house of William Morse was infested in "a most horrid manner." The house of Nicholaus Desborough at Hartford, next felt the fury of the wandering demons, and after many attacks, "no little part of Desborough's property was consumed." Portsmouth was next beset, and the house of George Walton much deteriorated. Stacks of hay were taken up and hung upon trees, and others made into small wisps and scattered about; but no hanging seems to have been the consequence of this wonderful affair.

At Salmon falls, in 1682, the wife of Antonia Hortado was alarmed by a voice at the door, "*what do you here*"? —and "about an hour after, she received a blow on her eye, that almost spoiled her." The woman and her husband afterwards crossing a river in a canoe, saw "*the head of a man, and about three feet off, the tail of a cat, swimming before them, on which they paddled back.*" Many other extraordinaries took place, but fortunately no hanging.

A more disastrous affair happened in Hadley, on Connecticut river, in 1684. This shall be given in the exact language of Dr. Cotton Mather. "Mr. Philip Smith, aged about fifty years, a son of eminently virtuous parents,

* Magnalia, Vol. 2. Book, 6.

†As Dr. Mather supposes was sometimes the case. Vol. ii. book 7.

a deacon of a Church in Hadley, a member of the General Court, a justice in the country court, a selectman for the affairs of the town, a lieutenant of the troop, and which crowns all, a man for devotion, sanctity, gravity, and all that was honest exceeding exemplary. Such a man was in the winter of the year 1684, murder'd with an hideous witchcraft, that filled all those parts of New England with astonishment. He was by his office concerned about relieving the indigence of a wretched woman in the town, who being dissatisfied at some of his just cares about her, expressed herself unto him in such a manner, that he declared himself thenceforward apprehensive of receiving mischief at her hands.

"About the beginning of January he began to be very valetudinarious, laboring under pains that seemed Ischiatick. The standers by could now see in him, one ripening apace for another world, and filled with grace and joy to an high degreee. He shewed such weanedness from, and weariness of the world, that he knew not (he said) whether he might pray for his continuance here; And such assurance he had of the Divine love unto him, that in raptures he would cry out, *Lord stay thy hand, it is enough, it is more than thy frail servant can bear.* But in the midst of these things he still uttered an hard suspicion that the ill woman who had threatened him, had made impressions with enchantments upon him. While he remained yet of a sound mind, he very sedately, but very solemnly charged his brother to look well after him. Though, he said, he now understood himself, yet he knew not how he might be. But be sure (said he) to have a care of me; for you shall see strange things. There shall be a wonder in Hadley!—I shall not be dead, when tis thought I am!—He pressed this charge over and over; and afterwards became delirious; upon which he had a speech incessant and voluable, and (as was judged) in various languages. He cry'd out, not only of pains, but also of pins, tormenting him in several parts of his body; and the attendants found one of them.

"In his distress, he exclaimed much upon the woman aforesaid, and others, as being seen by him in the room; and there was divers times, both in that room, and over the whole house, a strong smell something like musk,

which once particularly so scented an apple roasting at the fire, that it forced them to throw it away. Some of the young men in the town, being out of their wits at the strange calamities thus upon one of their most beloved neighbors, went three or four times to give disturbance unto the woman thus complained of; and all the while they were disturbing her, he was at ease, and slept as a weary man: yea, these were the only times that they perceived him take any sleep in all his illness.* Gally pots of medicines, provided for the sick man, were unaccountably emptied: and audible scratchings were made about the bed, when his hands and feet lay wholly still, and were held by others. They beheld fire sometimes on the bed; and when the beholders began to discourse of it, it vanished away. Divers people actually felt something often stir in the bed, at a considerable distance from the man: it seemed as big as a cat, but they could never grasp it. Several trying to lean on the bed's head, though the sick man lay wholly still, the bed would shake so as to knock their heads uncomfortably. A very strong man could not lift the sick man to make him lie more easily, though he apply'd his utmost strength unto it; and yet he could go presently and lift a bed-stead and bed, and a man lying on it, without any strain to himself at all. Mr. Smith dies: the jury that viewed his corpse, found a swelling on one breast, his privities wounded or burned, his back full of bruises, and several holes that seemed made with awls. After the opinion of all had pronounced him dead, his countenance continued as lively as if he had been alive; his eyes closed as in a slumber, and his nether jaw not falling down."

"Thus he remained from Saturday morning about sun rise, till Sabbath day in the afternoon, when those who took him out of bed, found him still warm, though the season was as cold as had almost been known in any age: and a New England winter does not want for cold. On the night following, his coutenance was yet fresh as before; but on Monday morning they found the face ex-

* Hutchinson says, they dragged the woman out of her house—hung her up until she was nearly dead, then let her down—rolled her sometime in the snow, and at last buried her in it, and there left her; but it happened she revived, and the melancholy man died.—History of Massachusetts, Vol. ii. p. 24.

tremely tumify'd and discoloured. It was black and blue, and fresh blood seemed running down his cheek upon the hairs. Divers noises were also heard in the room where the corpse lay; as the clattering of chairs and stools, whereof no account could be given. This was the end of so good a man."* Whether the old lady was indicted for the *murder*, does not appear; perhaps the sufferings she had undergone, wrought so upon her that no further prestigious efforts were apprehended.

The demons now again descended the river to Hartford, and tendered their services to one Mary Johnson, who was indicted, condemned and hanged They then returned to Boston, and by "a very stupendous witchcraft," arrested four children of the family of John Goodman; but after many severe sufferings, three of the afflicted were relieved, by some pious ministers of that place and Charlestown, who appointed a day of fasting and prayer on the occasion, at the troubled house. An Irish woman who was suspected as the cause of the wonderful phenomena, was however committed to the care of the gaoler, and afterwards condemned and hanged.

Many other cases, related with all the particulars, by the historians of the times, occurred in various parts of New England, and they extended to New York,† and the demons were very successful in their prestigious attacks. But at length, relinquishing their *petite guerre*, they concentrated their whole force, and attempted to carry one of the strong holds, by a *coup de main*; and it must be acknowledged they made a most horrid slaughter. Salem was the devoted place, and the family of Mr. Paris, pastor of the church, sustained the first onset in 1692. Soon after many others were involved in the calamity, and the invisibles made use of their keenest arts in afflicting and tormenting the deluded people.

Tedious and disgusting would it be, to recite the whole of the cases that occurred at this place, with the puerile

* Magnalia, Vol. ii. Book, 6.

† At the court of assizes held in New York, October 1665, Ralph Hall, and his wife were tried upon suspicion of witchcraft. The jury fonnd that there were suspicions against the woman, but none which would justify the taking away of life; the man was acquitted. The woman however was bound over to the next session, and finally released. Other cases occurred.

Smith's History of New York. *Notes.*

examinations before the magistrates, by whom the innocent people were committed and held for trial, before the higher courts. Those who were supposed to be afflicted by the witches, complained of the most excruciating torments, by some invisible power, which they called the *devil.* Suffice it to state, they were distorted and convulsed; pinched with great violence, pierced and burnt with hot irons, and frequently scalded—invisible poisons administered, which produced great swellings of the body; their money was sometimes forced from them and afterwards dropped from the atmosphere; some became dumb, their throats were choaked, their limbs racked—others rode through the air upon poles, and in this manner were carried several miles to witch meetings; and many other cruelties are mentioned. The afflicted were supposed to possess so refined a vision, as to see their tormentors, "as well as the *devil,* who tendered them a book, requiring their signature, or at least a touch, in token of having enlisted into his service;" and on refusal, their torments were rendered more intense. These were not supposed to be bewitched until they complied with the devil's requisitions; but their torments were attributed to some evil person in the neighborhood, acting as the agent of his satanick majesty; generally, at first, women of suspicious characters, who had enlisted into his service.

Numerous other preternatural and unaccountable transactions are related by historians, particularly by Dr. Cotton Mather, who probably, aware of ridicule from the enlightened part of the community, attempts to shield himself under the following salvo. "Flashy people may burlesque these things; but when hundreds of the most sober people in a country, where they have as much mother wit, certainly as the rest of mankind, *know them to be true;* nothing but the absurd and froward spirit of sadducism can question them." "I have not," says he, "mentioned so much as one thing that will not be justified, if it be required by the oaths of more consistent persons, than any that can ridicule these odd phenomena." And after a very full detail of the transactions of the invisibles, he adds, "Nor are these the tenth part of

the prodigies, that fell out among the inhabitants of New England."

Among the doctor's "flashy people," to their honor be it noted, were Simeon Bradstreet, Thomas Danforth, Rev. Increase Mather, Rev. Samuel Willard and major N. Saltonstall, all gentlemen of high standing, and the last, one of the judges of the court who left his seat. These gentlemen, if they did not view the whole affair to have originated in delusion, utterly condemned the proceedings of the courts, and freely declared their opinions of their measures.*

The furious infatuation continued to reign in Salem, and other places in the neighborhood, and the prisons were crowded with accused persons; but though commitments had continued from February to June, no trials had taken place, for want of a court, until the first week in the latter month. At this time, that of oyer and terminer sat at Salem, when an elderly lady was tried and condemned, and soon afterwards executed. The court then adjourned to the thirtieth of the same month, and the governor, (Sir. William Phipps,) and council in the mean time, according to an old charter practice, applied to several of the principal ministers, for their opinion upon the state of affairs.

In their return to the governor, these *enlightened* gentlemen deplored the afflicted state of those who are molested from the invisible world, and expressed thanks for the endeavours of the rulers to defeat the abominable witchcrafts in the country. They then proceeded to give instructions concerning prosecutions for the crime; but urge caution, "least by too much credulity for things received only upon the devil's authority, there be a door opened for a long train of miserable consequences, and satan get an advantage over them." Assuming the style of lawyers, they then say, "As in complaints upon witchcraft, there may be matters of inquiry, which do not amount unto matters of presumption, and there may be matters of presumption which yet may not be matters of conviction, so it is necessary that all proceedings thereabout, be managed with an exceeding tenderness, towards those who may be complained of, especially if they have been

* Brattles' account of the Witchcraft.—Mass. Historical Society, Vol. v.

persons formerly of an unblemished reputation. Presumption whereupon persons may be committed, and much more, convictions whereupon persons may be condemned as guilty of witchcraft, ought certainly to be more considerable, than barely the accused persons being represented by a spectre unto the afflicted; in as much as it is an undoubted and a notorious thing, that a demon may, by God's permission appear, even to ill purposes, in the shape of an innocent, yea, a virtuous man. Nor can we esteem alterations made in the sufferers, by a look, or touch of the accused, to be an infallible evidence of guilt; but frequently liable to be abused by the devil's legerdemain."

After these cautions, the *sage* counsellors, instead of hinting at the possibility of the whole being a delusion, as common sense would have perceived, at least as probable, they add, "Nevertheless we cannot but humbly recommend unto the government, the speedy and vigorous prosecution of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the *direction given in the laws of God*, and the wholesome statutes of the English nation for the detection of witchcraft."*

Fully determined to adopt the advice of the ministers, in "speedy and vigorous prosecutions," the court sat at Salem on the thirtieth of June, and five accused women were tried, and four promptly condemned; the other who had sustained a good character, was at first acquitted by the jury; but such was the clamor of the accusors, and the court expressing dissatisfaction, the jury went out a second time, and returned with a virdict of guilty, and the whole were executed.

At the trial of one of the prisoners, an afflicted person, a female, who was a principal witness, fell into a pretended fit, and after recovery, cried out that "the prisoner had stabbed her, and broke her knife in the act," and she exhibited the broken piece to the court. A young man present, immediately declared that the day previous, he broke the knife and threw away the piece, in presence of the witness; but such was the astonishing infatuation of the court, to give it no other name, that they only cautioned her against telling more lies, and

* Hutchinson, Vol. ii. p. 52.

afterwards admitted her as a witness against others on trial.

At the next court, held by adjournment, by judges Hawthorn and Sewall, the fifth of August, six persons were indicted, four of whom were condemned and executed. Among these was Mr. George Burrows, who had been a preacher several years in Salem, and other towns to the eastward. The indictment against this man was in the following words.

Anno Regis et Reginæ, &c. Quarto.

Essex, ss.

The Jurors for our sovereign lord and lady the king and queen present, that George Burrows late of Falmouth, in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, clerk, the ninth day of May, in the fourth year of the reign of our Sovereign lord and lady William and Mary, by the Grace of God of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, king and queen, defenders of the faith, &c. and divers other days and times, as well before as after, certain detestable arts, called witchcrafts and Sorceries, wickedly and feloniously hath used, practised and exercised, at and within the town of Salem, in the County of Essex, aforesaid, in, upon, and against one Mary Walcot, of Salem Village in the County of Essex, single woman, by which such wicked arts, the said Mary Walcot the ninth day of May, in the fourth year abovesaid, and divers other days and times, as well before as after, was, and is, tortured, afflicted, pined, consumed, wasted and tormented, against the peace of our lord and lady, the king and queen, and against the form of the statute in that case made and provided.

(Endorsed) *Billa vera.**

Three other bills were found against Mr. Burroughs, for witchcraft upon other persons, and little was the chance for an acquittal, before a court already deeply stained with innocent blood. The evidence adduced in support of the charges against him are too puerile to be recited. Suffice it to say, he was found guilty, on all the indictments. At the gallows he concluded his dying address, by repeating the Lord's prayer, which as this was

* Hutchinson's Massachusetts, Vol. ii. p. 57.

supposed to be impossible for a witch, excited some doubts of his guilt, among the infatuated people.

In the month of September, fifteen other persons, all females excepting one, were condemned, eight of whom were executed. At the same court Giles Cory, one of the accused, seeing the fate of those who had been tried, refused to plead; on which the *humane* court awarded the judgment of *peine fort et dure*, and he was *pressed to death*. The most ferocious savage would have recoiled at the barbarity; but the court was more refined in its ferocity, and persisted in its determination, with callous indifference. A law soon after passed the general court, constituting a standing court of trials, and that of oyer and terminer, by which nineteen innocent persons had lost their lives, ended its bloody career. But commitments continued, and the gaols at Salem and some other places, were crowded with accused people, among whom were many females of reputable families, and the mania began to spread far and wide, and some of the officers of justice were implicated. A fortunate circumstance!

At the court holden in January, 1693, the grand jury found bills against fifty persons, for the supposed crime. One against Mary Osgood, was in the following words.

Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England. } Anno. R. & Reginae Gulielmi, et Mariæ Anglic. &c. Quarto.

Anno Domini, 1692.*

The Jurors for our sovereign lord and lady, the king and queen, present, that Mary Osgood, wife of Capt. John Osgood, of Andover, in the county of Essex, about eleven years ago, in the town of Andover aforesaid, wilfully, maliciously, and feloniously, a covenant with the Devil did make; and signed the Devil's book, and took the Devil to be her God, and consented to serve and worship him, and was baptized by the Devil, and renounced her former Christian baptism, and promised to be the Devil's both body and soul forever, and serve him; by which diabolical covenant, by her made with the Devil, she, the said Mary Osgood is become a detestable witch, against the peace of our sovereign lord and lady, the king

* At this time, the year commenced on the twenty fifth of March, and according to the present reckoning, the indictment would bear date in 1693.

and queen, their crown and dignity, and the laws in that case made and provided.

Billa vera. THOMAS PAGE, Foreman.*

The other bills, excepting in one or two instances, were against females, and some accusations were made against people of more elevated rank, than those who had fallen victims, among whom was the governor's lady. This brought the court to a pause, and they, as well as the people, began to open their eyes to the fatal delusion. On trial, all, except three of the worst characters, were acquitted, and these governor Phipps reprieved for the king's mercy. Those who were not brought to trial at this court were discharged.

The dreadful mania extended to the counties of Middlesex and Suffolk, where some were indicted; but on trial acquitted. More than one hundred women, many of fair characters and of reputable families, had been accused, principally in Salem, Beverly, Andover, Billerica and other towns in the vicinity, and in most cases, committed to prison. Some had the good fortune to escape, and many who found themselves implicated, left the province before warrants were issued for their apprehension. Under the hope of mercy, some of the condemned persons confessed the pretended crime; but subsequently retracted their confessions; and all who were executed, persisted in their innocency to the last. The alarm occasioned by the fury was so great, that in some instances, wives accused their husbands, children their parents, and parents their children, merely for the purpose of exculpating themselves. Compared with this horrible situation, the depredations and murders of the savages on the frontiers, were acts of humanity, and the demoralizing effects must have been of the deepest die.

The furious volcano at length spent its rage; the officers of government recoiled, and the people were struck with astonishment at the bloody scene. On the return of their senses, several of the jurors publicly acknowledged their error; and judge Sewall, sometime after, made a written confession in which he expressed "a deep sense of guilt contracted upon opening the late court of oyer and terminer at Salem; and asked pardon of God and

* Massachusetts Historical Collections, Vol. vii. p. 241.

man," which was read by the Rev. Mr. Willard to his congregation. But chief justice Stoughton, on being informed of this retraction of his brother judge, observed "that when he sat in judgment he had the fear of God before his eyes, and gave his opinion according to the best of his understanding; and although it might appear afterwards, that he had been in an error, he saw no necessity of a public acknowledgment of it."*

Remarking upon the extraordinary infatuation, Hutchinson says, "a little attention must force conviction, that the whole was a scene of fraud and imposture, began by young girls, who at first perhaps thought of nothing more than being pitied and indulged; and continued by adult persons who were afraid of being accused themselves. The one and the other, rather than confess their fraud, suffered the lives of so many innocents to be taken away through the credulity of the judges and jurors."—That the train which led to the charged mine was ready to be fired by the smallest spark is readily admitted; and the cause assigned for the explosion at Salem, may have been the real one. But the delusion, it is evident, had a more remote origin, and a short recurrence to history will develope the source of the delusion so general among the leading men in the early settlement of this country.

"In the reign of James 1st, says Hume, every science, as well as polite literature must be considered as being yet in its infancy. Scholastic learning and polemical divinity retarded the growth of all true knowledge. Sir Henry Saville, in the preamble of that deed by which he annexed a salary to the mathematical and astronomical professors in Oxford, says geometry was almost totally abandoned and unknown in England. The best learning of that age was the study of the antients."†

The Abbe Millot, treating of the state of government, manners, religion and science, during the first part of the seventeenth century, gives a gloomy picture of learning in Europe. The following is the substance of his statement.

Men of letters were in general entirely destitute of the philosophic spirit. The greatest part pursued the pe-

* Hutchinson's Massachusetts, Vol. ii, p. 62.
† History of England. Vol. vi, p. 136—Reign of James 1st.

dantic taste attached to the ungrateful studies of pure erudition. They wasted their strength on passages of Greek and Latin authors; arrogantly despised what did not bear the stamp of antiquity; and the foul language with which their works abound, was in their estimation, a beauty of style. The little known of science was under the trammels of the peripatetic philosophy, which was imperiously taught to youth in public schools, by men who drew from it their very existence; who were filled with rage at the least appearance of novelty, and anathematized reason, because they justly dreaded its power. In a word it may be said, that thought and common sense often became a crime. Did a genius venture to break the shackles which bound philosophy to the chimerical notions of the times, he was immediately seized by the power of the Romish church, and compelled to renounce his principles, or suffer the sentence of the inquisition. Gassendi dared not combat Aristotle but with endless precaution, submitting his works to the judgment of the Church. Descartes having retired into Holland that he might there enjoy liberty, met with persecution in that country, and found himself accused of atheism, after having published new proofs of the existence of a Deity.

Galileo met with more severe obstacles. When by the aid of a telescope he had improved, he brought forward demonstrative proofs of the truth of the Copernican system, a monk lodged an information against him before the inquisition, and he was compelled to promise that he would no longer maintain the system, by word or writing. Disregarding this forced promise, he soon after published his "Dialogue," containing further proofs of the system. Upon this, in 1633, he was summoned to Rome, and the *sage* inquisitors passed the following sentence upon his work. "To say that the sun is in the centre and has no local motion, is a proposition absurd and false in sound philosophy; it is even heretical, being expressly contrary to the holy scripture. To say that the earth is not placed in the centre of the world, nor immovable, but that it has even a diurnal motion, is likwise a proposition false and absurd in sound philosophy, and at least erroneous in the faith." Galileo was imprisoned, and constrained solemnly to abjure his "*absurdities and heresy.*"

But though the thunders of the vatican were unable to keep down the bold efforts of genius, the great body of the people, the clergy and the magistrates, still continued the slaves of many absurd prejudices. Astrology maintained its credit; trials for witchcraft were common, and attended with horrid consequences. Urban Grandier was burnt alive in 1634, on a charge of having bewitched several nuns. Numerous other cases occurred in various parts of Europe, and hundreds were put to death.

In England, says Miss Aikin, during the reign of James the first, who was a firm believer in witchcraft, it is computed that no less than one hundred persons fell victims to the prevalence of the superstition fostered by the royal example; but the most celebrated of the kind took place at Lancaster in 1612, where nineteen unfortunate persons were indicted for the crime, ten of whom were convicted and executed. To prove one of these, a female, guilty of the crime, an evidence was admitted, of its *having been the opinion of many not in court*, that she had turned his beer sour!*

After the death of Charles 1st, according to Hume, the fanaticism which prevailed, being so full of sour and angry principles, and so over charged with various antipathies, had acquired new objects of abhorrence. These were the sorcerers. So prevalent was the opinion of witchcraft, that great numbers accused of the crime were burnt by sentence of the magistrates, through all parts of Scotland. In a village near Berwick, which contained only fourteen houses, fourteen persons were punished with fire; and it became a science every where much studied and cultivated, to distinguish a true witch by proper trials and symptoms.†

During these times of insanity, books were published in Great Britain in support of the existence of witches, as well as on the best modes of trying them; and in some instances, gentlemen of the law engaged in the work. Among these books were Keeble on the common law (approved by the twelve judges)—Matthew Hale's Trials of Witches, anno 1682—Glanvil's Collections of Sundry Trials in England and Ireland, in 1658, et seq.—Bar-

* Memoirs of the court of James 1st.
† History of England, Vol. vii, p. 193.

nard's Guide to Jurymen—Baxter's, et al. History of Witches—Wierus de Proestigiis Doemonum. In the last work we have the following definition of a witch, "a person that having the full use of his reason, doth knowingly and willingly, seek and obtain of the Devil, or any *other God*, besides the true God Jehovah, an ability to do, or know strange thing, or things which he cannot by his own human abilities arrive unto."

In this semi-barbarous state of Europe, a passage across the Atlantic, and the settlement of a new country infested by savages, where no opportunity presented for improvement in knowledge, was ill calculated to produce a change of mind, and eradicate the absurdities the adventurers had imbibed in their mother country. If religious persecution had taught them to think more correctly on religious establishments, they soon forgot the lesson, and in a short time, exhibited the same persecuting spirit which they found so intolerable in that country. In the treatment of the Quakers and others who held sentiments differing from theirs, it would be a stretch of charity hardly to be expected, to admit that they acted from pure motives. Some valuable qualities they certainly possessed, and they deserve much applause for their perseverance and great resolution in breasting the hardships and dangers incident to the settlement of the country. But after allowing this, we are compelled to acknowledge, with an approved historian, "that under a pretext of following the pure gospel, they were capable of every extravagance—of every excess to which the enthusiasm of imaginary perfection, or the delirium of unreal virtues, can hurry men of a gloomy and violent temper."

Before the witch mania broke out in New England, the leading men, with a few exceptions, had deeply imbibed the fatal delusion, and the authority of sir Matthew Hale, instead of a striking instance of the imbecility sometimes observed in great minds, was considered as a demonstration of the reality of prestigious agency; and unfortunately, the officers of government, as well as a great proportion of the clergy in New England were dupes to the delusion; and as the laity looked to the latter for instruction in spiritual affairs, they readily embraced their opinions. Had these leaders intermixed a little sound

science with their theological learning, they would have avoided the error; and by treating the first cases with ridicule and contempt, have put it to rest. But instead of this they threw about it the veil of mystery—appointed solemn fasts, and implored the Deity to interpose, and put a stop to works, which they attributed to the devil* —to an evil being, without material existence, endowed by Deity with powers to suspend his laws—to mislead mankind from the paths of duty, and to inflict wounds by actual tangibility, with an invisible hand!

Among the clergy who embraced the delusion, was the Rev. Cotton Mather, D. D. & F. R. S. who flourished at the time in Boston. That he should become a convert to prestigious agency, has not been considered mysterious by those acquainted with his singular anomalies—limited science, and peculiar views. A few extracts from his master work, entitled "Magnalia Christi Americana," will exhibit, not only his, but the prevalent superstition of the times in which he lived. They are here given in his own words.

"Tis very likely that the *evil angels*, may have a particular energy and employment, often times in the mischiefs done by thunder. There [in the air] Satan can do mighty things—command much of the magazine of heaven—Satan let loose by God, can do wonders in the air. He can raise storms, he can discharge the great ordnance of Heaven, thunders and lightning; and by his art can make them more terrible, and dreadful than they are in their own nature. Tis no heresy or blasphemy to think that the prince of the power of the air hath as good share in Chymistry, as goes to the making of *Aurum fulminans*.†

"The devil is the prince of the power of the air, and when God gives him leave, he has vast power in the air, and armies, that can make thunder in the air. A great man has therefore noted it—'that thunders break oftener on Churches, than any other houses, because the demons have a peculiar spite at houses that are set apart for the peculiar service of God.'

* Soon after Mr. Paris's daughter was found to be under the power of the witches, he preached from this text, "*Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.*"

† Vol. ii. Book 6. p. 312.

"In the days of Moses it seems the desarts were counted very much the habitation of devils." "Who can tell whether the envy of the devils at the favor of God unto men, may not provoke them to affect retirement from the sight of populous and prosperous regions, except so far as they reckon their work of tempting mankind, necessary to be carried on?

"Whatever becomes of the observations which we have hitherto been making, there has been too much cause to observe that the Christians who were driven into the American desart, which is now called New England, have to their sorrow seen *Azazel* dwelling and raging in very tragical instances. The devils have doubtless felt a more than ordinary vexation, from the arrival of these Christians, with their sacred exercises of christianity in this wilderness. But the sovereignty of Heaven has permitted them still to remain in the wilderness, for our vexation as well as their own."*

Quitting the direct agency of the devil, the doctor details many other prodigies, which he supposes ominous of great events, and which he probably imputed to the *good angels*, one or more of whom he believed presided *in the air*, over every town and village. A short time prior to Philips' war he relates, in a grave and serious manner, that noises were heard in the air, similar to the discharge of artillery and small arms, accompanied with the beating of drums, as in a battle. In several places invisible troops of horse are said to have been heard, riding through the air. His *naval apparition* must not be omitted. A ship sailed from a port in New England for Europe, with many passengers, and was supposed to be foundered at sea; but as the event was doubtful, the people remained in suspense. At length, behold! a ship rigged out in every part similar to the one that had been lost, entered the harbor of New Haven, and winged its way through the air, directly in the face of the wind, until it arrived near the wharf, when its masts and rigging went overboard, and many signals of distress were displayed; but soon the whole vanished from the sight. Now, adds the sage, "prepare for the event of those prodigies; but count me not struck with a Livian super-

* Vol. ii p. 389.

stition in reporting prodigies, for which I have such incontestable proofs." Many other phenomena extraordinary and unaccountable, are also detailed with great minuteness by the doctor; but it is believed the reader will be satisfied with those already given.

Similar phantoms were fostered by the *learned* of Europe, for a long time prior to the close of the seventeenth century. If in America, they were protracted to a later period, it is accounted for, in the natural embarrassments incident to the planting of a new country, and the consequent want of means for a more enlarged education. In Europe, had genius been left to pursue its natural course, the mental fog would have been sooner dissipated; the light of science extended through the deep gloom, and the mind freed from its shackles. Fortunately an original genius at length appeared, and boldly attempted to break the yoke of pedantry, and open the path to knowledge. This was Francis Bacon, of England, who in the reign of James, 1st. "comprehended in some short works the seeds of the greatest part of the discoveries; demonstrated the faults in the common methods, and proposed others of an excellent kind; exhibited the futility of abstractions which the doctors made the sole study; established the basis of science on the phenomena of nature; and in a manner, prophesied the miracles which they would in a short time produce. In a word, he proved that men knew nothing; which was at that time the most important lesson they could learn."*

Notwithstanding this scintillation, the dark cloud still hung over Europe, and it was nearly half a century before it was so far dissipated as to permit the sun of science to shine in its full lustre. At length Newton, and other men of genius, pursuing the Baconian road, applied boldly to the cultivation of science—studied nature in defiance of old systems, and by the aid of experiment, and mathematical investigation, established a system of philosophy on the firmest basis. America at length felt the blessed effects; colleges and schools were established upon liberal principles; classical learning was connected with philosophy; toleration in religion taught men to follow the dictates of their reason, without cutting each

* Millot's Elements, Vol. v. p. 90.

others throats; abler statesmen, and more enlightened clergy appeared; and witchcraft vanished from the scientific world. If the phantom still exists, it is only in the dark recesses of ignorance, where men shut their eyes to the light of philosophy, and are not ashamed to be considered ridiculous.